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COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
Fortieth session
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Agenda item 3

FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

Italy*: draft resolution

Comments on the proposed system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001

The Commission on the Status of Women,

Recalling Economic and Social Council resolution 1985/46, in which the Council requested the formulation of a system-wide medium-term plan for women and development, and the resulting Plan, 1/ as endorsed by the Council in its resolution 1987/86,

Also recalling Council resolution 1988/59, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to initiate the formulation of a system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women for the period 1996-2001,

Noting that the Commission had before it at its thirty-seventh session a draft system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001, 2/ and that in its resolution 1993/16, the Council adopted the proposal of the Commission on the Status of Women to invite the Secretary-General to revise the

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* On behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the European Union.

1/ E/1987/52.

2/ E/1992/43.

draft plan after the Beijing Platform for Action 3/ and the second review and appraisal of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women 4/ had been formulated and adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women,

Recognizing the role of the Council in overseeing system-wide coordination in the implementation of the Platform for Action,

Recalling that Governments have the primary responsibility for implementing the Platform for Action,

Further recalling that the Platform for Action needs to be implemented through the work of all of the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system as an integral part of system-wide programming,

Recognizing that the Platform for Action calls upon the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system to strengthen their support for actions at the national level and to enhance their contributions to coordinated follow-up by the United Nations, by setting out the specific actions that they will undertake, including goals and targets for realigning priorities and redirecting resources to meet the global priorities identified in the Platform for Action, with a clear delineation of responsibility and accountability, all of which should be reflected in the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001, and stressing in this connection the need for appropriate mechanisms for coordination and cooperation,

Aware that the Platform for Action stresses that the responsibility for ensuring its implementation and the integration of a gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the United Nations system must rest at the highest levels,

Also aware that the Platform for Action recommends that the Council consider dedicating at least one coordination segment before the year 2000 to coordination of the advancement of women, based on the revised system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women,

Further aware that the Platform for Action recommends that the Council consider dedicating at least one operational activities segment before the year 2000 to the consideration of development activities related to gender, based on the revised system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, with a view to instituting guidelines and procedures for implementation of the Platform for Action by the funds and programmes of the United Nations system,

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3/ Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995 (A/CONF.177/20), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

4/ Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

Mindful that the Platform for Action requests the Secretary-General to assume responsibility for the coordination of policy within the United Nations for the implementation of the Platform for Action and for mainstreaming a system-wide gender perspective in all activities of the United Nations,

1. Stresses that the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001 should be an effective instrument for promoting the coordinated implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action; 2/

2. Takes note with appreciation of the revised draft plan prepared by the Ad Hoc Inter-agency Meeting on Women; 5/

3. Recommends the adoption of the revised draft plan by the Economic and Social Council, taking into account the comments of the Commission contained in the annex to the present resolution;

4. Emphasizes the importance of a coherent approach and of the strategic orientation/focus of the United Nations system spelled out under each critical area of concern;

5. Stresses the importance of institutional follow-up, as well as gender mainstreaming and capacity-building;

6. Recommends that the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001 serve to orient the policy of the United Nations Secretariat and as a monitoring and coordination tool for system-wide progress in implementing actions under each critical area of concern in the Platform for Action;

7. Stresses the importance of involving all parts of the United Nations in the implementation of the Platform for Action, including the decision-making level;

8. Invites the United Nations bodies that meet under the auspices of the Administrative Committee on Coordination to regularly discuss progress made in implementing activities under each area of critical concern, in keeping with the long-term programme of work of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council, and to provide up-to-date information in those areas to the Council through the Commission, taking into consideration the comments made on the plan by the Commission and other relevant bodies;

9. Recommends that the Council, through the Commission, undertake a comprehensive mid-term review of the implementation of the plan as a basis for future programming and coordination of activities for the advancement and empowerment of women by the United Nations system, including a review of progress in mainstreaming a gender perspective in all activities of the United Nations system;

5/ E/CN.6/1996/CRP.2.

10. Invites the Secretary-General to submit to the Council for its consideration of the draft plan the comments of the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the Administrative Committee on Coordination, along with the comments of the Commission;

11. Recommends that the Administrative Committee on Coordination and the proposed Inter-Agency Committee on Advancement and Employment of Women use the plan and comments on it as a basis for monitoring increasing collaboration and cost-effective approaches to United Nations system activities for the advancement and empowerment of women, including the assessment of the need for the preparation of guidelines on methods for mainstreaming a gender perspective in all United Nations activities, ensuring accountability and carrying out impact analyses of gender-aware programmes and policies;

12. Recommends that the Council request the Secretary-General to submit to it, through the Commission at its forty-second session, a progress report on the implementation of the plan;

13. Requests the Secretary-General to ensure the mainstreaming of a system-wide gender perspective in all United Nations activities, including in decision-making as part of the accountability of senior managers;

14. Urges the Secretary-General to implement the decision taken by the General Assembly at its fiftieth session to strengthen the capacity of the Division on the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Secretariat, and emphasizes the need to provide the necessary resources for the comprehensive follow-up of the Platform for Action in the current revision of the programme budget for the biennium;

15. Recommends that the Council request the formulation of a new system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women to cover the period 2002-2005, and that the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, submit the new draft plan to the Council at its substantive session of 2000 in order to influence the medium-term plans of the individual organizations of the United Nations system.

Annex

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN ON THE PROPOSED SYSTEM-WIDE MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN, 1996-2001*

I. GENERAL COMMENTS

1. The system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001 needs to be more than a compilation of what the organizations of the United Nations system are doing.

2. The concept of visible mainstreaming should be better reflected in the indicative planning of the system.

3. The list of actors under different critical areas of concern should not be exclusive.

4. More emphasis is needed on "policy formulation and guidance", as a bridge between research and analysis, function and operational training.

5. The United Nations Secretariat as a whole should undertake activities in the critical areas of concern - not only those entities that have a specific mandate on the advancement of women and the operational agencies. Certain entities of the Secretariat, such as the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, the Department of Political Affairs, the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, the Office of Legal Affairs and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, are not included in these activities. As another example, the Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome needs to be better reflected in the system-wide medium-term plan.

6. A more strategic orientation on the mainstreaming of a gender perspective within the work of the United Nations is needed.

II. SPECIFIC COMMENTS

A. Women and poverty

1. More emphasis should be placed on the need for joint efforts by the United Nations system as regards the use of gender-disaggregated data and the development of indicators to monitor trends in poverty from a gender perspective.

2. Insufficient attention is given to an understanding of the underlying causes of poverty.

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* The proposed system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001 was before the Commission in document E/CN.6/1996/CRP.2.

3. The integration of a gender dimension in the design and implementation of both macroeconomic and microeconomic policies, including structural adjustment programmes, is crucial. The system-wide medium-term plan highlights this as regards both research/analysis and operational activities. It is surprising, however, that no reference is made to the role of the World Bank in paragraph 29 or to United Nations funds and programmes (the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Population Fund).

4. There is the need for all United Nations bodies to be involved in development cooperation activities to mainstream a gender perspective into all their policies and programmes. This would imply the integration of gender analysis and the development of gender expertise both at Headquarters and in the field.

5. The reference to "family life education" is rather unclear. The need to integrate education on reproductive and sexual health, including family planning, into all population and development programmes should be addressed.

B. Education and training of women

6. Action within the United Nations Secretariat should include analysis and monitoring of data, policy development and coordination of action by various parts of the United Nations. Currently action is limited almost exclusively to United Nations agencies. There are limited references to the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development and the Department of Public Information.

7. The United Nations system should consider how to integrate life-long education and training throughout the activities of the system and promote similar action at the national level. Appropriate support mechanisms for teaching in difficult, especially violent, situations should be established.

8. Data collection and research should include wider activities of the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis.

9. Data collection should focus on data not currently available. Existing data may need to be presented in a different format to be useful to relevant committees but duplication of data collection should be avoided.

10. Measures that encourage the participation of girls and women in science and technology in primary, secondary and further education should be included.

C. Women and health

11. This section should reflect accurately the terminology from the International Conference on Population and Development and the Fourth World

Conference on Women, that is sexual and reproductive health and sexual rights instead of health and family planning.

12. All parts of the Platform for Action need to be implemented at all levels.

13. All relevant actors throughout the United Nations, including the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis, the United Nations Population Fund and the Centre for Human Rights need to be involved.

14. The role of caregivers should be included. Activities with respect to HIV/AIDS are welcomed, but the heavy burden of care that is often placed on caregivers, in particular women, needs to be addressed.

15. The general comments need to avoid duplication of activity, it should be recognized, however, that more than one actor will have an interest in each area.

16. The involvement of men needs to be further addressed, as does the encouragement of men and women to take responsibility for their sexual and reproductive behaviour.

17. The Centre for Human Rights should highlight the implications of sexual rights as a human rights issue.

D. Violence against women

18. Actions contained in the system-wide medium-term plan in relation to strategic objective D.3 (Eliminate trafficking in women and assist victims of violence due to prostitution and trafficking) of the Platform for Action are very limited, as is the list of organizations involved.

E. Women and armed conflict

19. The focus under this critical area of concern should be on actions to be taken by the United Nations system in order to protect women who are victims or who are at risk of becoming victims, of armed conflict from violence and abuse.

20. Measures to raise awareness of women's rights in armed conflict, and in the training of police, military personnel, health workers, teachers, managers of camps for refugee/displaced persons and so forth should be further elaborated.

21. Measures to promote the more active participation of women in conflict resolution need to be addressed. In so doing, however, the system-wide medium-term plan should not assume - as the text now does - that there is a main difference between women's and men's attitudes to peace, security and conflict solution.

F. Women and the economy

22. In relation to the care of children and dependants and the sharing of family responsibilities, child care and dependant care need to be provided as integral parts of the concept of gender equality and gender analysis, and ILO Convention No. 156 needs to be promoted.

23. In operational activities, there should be a greater commitment to the provision of care of children and dependants.

24. The work on indicators should be better coordinated. The World Bank should also be associated with the analysis of data on globalization and change in international work patterns.

25. Under operational activities, there should be a clearer reference to United Nations system assistance to Governments in implementing policies to ensure women equal rights with men to economic resources; this should include access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, credit, inheritance, natural resources and new technologies.

26. As regards women in the rural sector, as reflected in paragraphs 137 and 138 of the system-wide medium-term plan, there should be more emphasis on the concepts contained in the Platform for Action, in particular paragraph 166 (c) thereof.

G. Women in power and decision-making

27. The expression "parity" is not used in the Platform for Action and should not be used in the system-wide medium-term plan.

28. Decision-making is a cross-cutting theme throughout the Platform for Action and should be addressed at all levels.

29. The linkage between the productive and reproductive roles of women should be stressed.

30. Activities within the United Nations Secretariat in this area of concern need to be strengthened.

31. The United Nations Statistics Division should collect and publicize statistics (in a yearly publication) on the number of women and men throughout the United Nations system at all levels.

32. Research on men's representation in fields where they are underrepresented should be stressed.

33. Dialogue with and the participation of local communities and civil society needs to be strengthened in development activities.

H. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women

34. The United Nations system should take into account that the main task of national machineries for the advancement of women is to support government-wide mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all policy areas, and that Governments should create or strengthen national machineries and other governmental bodies for the advancement of women.

35. Providing technical assistance and support to Governments on how to strengthen institutional capacities for the advancement of women requires a broader range of actions to be considered than those reflected in the system-wide medium-term plan, which focus particularly on the collection, use and dissemination of data. Including gender capacity-building elements in national plans and development strategies, as well as in supportive efforts provided by international cooperation, should be considered.

I. Human rights of women

36. It should be stressed that this is the priority objective of the United Nations.

37. The United Nations should develop a comprehensive policy programme for mainstreaming the human rights of women throughout the United Nations system emphasizing the strengthening of the cooperation and coordination between different entities of the United Nations in the promotion and protection of the human rights of women.

38. Reference to sexual and reproductive rights should be included.

39. Integration of human rights in all activities of the United Nations should be emphasized.

J. Women and the media

40. This section should be updated in the light of the Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development.

41. The activities of all parts of the United Nations Secretariat should be reflected, not just those of the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Department of Public Information. A gender element is needed in all programmes.

42. Emphasis should be placed on the ability to communicate in order to get the mainstreaming message across.

43. Public information and outreach should be undertaken by all parts of the United Nations system. Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all publications is essential. The role of women in political activity, as well as in the social and economic activity in the United Nations system is important. Not only should agencies that have traditionally had a role in

this critical area of concern undertake activities, but also others should get more involved in the future.

K. Women and the environment

44. In the indication of areas of research, more emphasis should be given to the issues identified in paragraph 258 (b) of the Platform for Action.

45. The work on indicators should be integrated with the work initiated under the aegis of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

L. The girl child

46. Educating the girl child about rights guaranteed to her under international human rights should be given more importance.

47. Health should be emphasized, including reproductive and sexual health and information on human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome.

M. Institutional arrangements

48. More attention should be given to measures to promote mainstreaming of a gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the United Nations.

49. Clarification has to be sought on progress regarding innovative mobilization of resources.

50. Experiences from bilateral cooperation should be taken into account by indicating best practices and the importance of policy dialogue and country strategies.

51. The role of the Economic and Social Council and the importance of coordinated follow-up of all major United Nations conferences should be further highlighted.

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FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

Draft agreed conclusions submitted by the Vice-Chairperson Ljudmila Boskova (Bulgaria)

Women and the media

1. The Beijing Platform for Action identifies women and the media as one of the 12 critical areas of concern. As stated in the Beijing Platform for Action, gender stereotyping in advertising and the media is one of the factors of inequality that influences attitudes towards equality between women and men. Through a series of dialogues on the subject during its fortieth session, the Commission on the Status of Women examined measures to be used for increasing the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication. Everywhere the potential exists for the media to make a far greater contribution to the advancement of women. The conclusions emanating from the Commission's dialogue contain proposals for successful implementation of the strategic objectives and actions in the Platform for Action, taking into consideration the importance of implementing all the elements of the Platform.

I. RESPECT FOR THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN, INCLUDING FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, AND THE MEDIA

2. The Commission on the Status of Women reconfirmed the importance it attached to the principles of freedom of expression and of freedom of the press and other means of communication. There was debate about freedom of expression from a gender perspective, in particular as it related to women's full enjoyment of freedom of expression, equal access to the media, balanced and diverse portrayals by the media of women and their multiple roles, and media information

aimed at eliminating all forms of violence against women. Respect for the human rights of women, including freedom of expression, is a fundamental principle of the international community. In this regard, concern was also expressed about discrimination, threats and acts of violence against professional women in the field of information, including women journalists. If the goal of the full realization of the human rights of women, including freedom of expression, is to be achieved, human rights instruments must be applied in such a way as to take more clearly into consideration the systematic and systemic nature of discrimination against women that gender analysis has clearly indicated.

3. Relevant United Nations bodies, including the Commission on Human Rights and its mechanisms and procedures, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and independent expert bodies, should within their mandates further examine violations of the human rights of women, including freedom of opinion and freedom of expression, from a gender perspective, in cooperation with the Commission on the Status of Women within its mandate.

II. SELF-REGULATION, VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES AND RESPONSIVENESS TO CIVIL SOCIETY

4. The Platform for Action states that self-regulatory mechanisms by the media should be encouraged and, consistent with freedom of expression, should include the development of professional guidelines and codes of conduct and other forms of self-regulation so as to eliminate gender-biased programming and to promote the presentation of non-stereotypical images of women and balanced and diverse portrayals of women and men.

5. In the context of responsiveness to civil society, self-regulation for public and private sector industries should be set within a framework of monitoring, awareness and education and well-developed and effective avenues for complaint. Such self-regulatory measures and voluntary guidelines should be established through a process of dialogue with media professionals, not by coercion.

6. With regard to the presentation of violence in the media, initiatives by Governments and other relevant actors, as appropriate, should be taken to raise awareness of the role of the media in promoting non-stereotyped images of women and men, as well as in eliminating patterns of media presentation that generate violence, and encouraging those responsible for media content to establish voluntary professional guidelines and codes of conduct and also raising awareness of the important role of the media in informing and educating people about the causes and effects of violence against women.

7. The following initiatives are among those which could be taken, as appropriate, consistent with the freedom of expression:

(a) Encourage the media to take part in international discussions, including the exchange of information and sharing of best practices on voluntary guidelines on a gender-balanced portrayal of women and men. Special attention should be given to the proliferation of transborder and global communications;

(b) Support and encourage women's equal participation in management, programming, education, training and research, including through positive action and equal opportunity policies, with the goal of achieving gender balance in all areas and at all levels of media work, as well as in the media advisory, regulatory and monitoring bodies.

III. THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF MEDIA EDUCATION

8. Media education, through, for example, practical workshops and training sessions, is an effective way to create greater awareness of gender stereotyping and equality issues among the general public, government, media industries and professionals.

9. In countries where major parts of the population, including many women, are illiterate or media illiterate, Governments should support the goal of providing appropriate education and training.

10. The civil society at large has an important role in exercising its influence on media content and stereotyped portrayal through consumer action and advocacy and different forms of media watch.

11. At the international level, an exchange of national experiences on media education and other measures can benefit legislators, national broadcasting authorities and media professionals.

IV. CREATE AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

12. The creation of a positive environment is a condition to promote measures intended to achieve a balanced portrayal of women and girls. Changes should be promoted in an enabling way and not through prescriptions. Ongoing research, including the establishment of indicators and monitoring, is important for assessing progress.

13. An enabling environment should also be created for women's media, including at the international level, such as the development of Womenwatch. The vital role of non-governmental organizations in media education, research, consumer advocacy and monitoring should be recognized and enhanced.

14. Media networks should be encouraged to make a commitment, or strengthen their commitment to gender equality. Public media, where they exist, should be encouraged to set an example for private media by their commitment and contribution to the advancement of women.

15. Governments should support research into all aspects of women and the media so as to define areas needing attention and action, as well as review existing media policies with a view to integrating a gender perspective.

16. To the extent consistent with freedom of expression, Governments should take effective measures or institute such measures, including appropriate

legislation against pornography and the projection of violence against women and children in the media.

V. WOMEN AND GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS

17. Advances in information technology have opened up boundaries. The role of women in global communication networks needs to be strengthened. Barriers to such information technology and to women's involvement at every level of its development should be reduced.

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FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

Agreed conclusions and recommendations submitted by the Chairperson on the basis of informal consultations

Child and dependant care, including sharing of responsibilities between men and women

1. Questions relating to child and dependant care, to sharing of family tasks and responsibilities and to unremunerated work must be taken fully into account in mainstreaming a gender perspective, in gender analysis and in all other relevant methodologies used to promote equality between men and women.

2. The main lines of action suggested in order to reduce the burden of family responsibilities on women and bring about the sharing of these responsibilities are the following:

A. Recognizing change

3. Economic and social changes - particularly the growing participation of women in economic and social life, the evolving nature of family structures, the feminization of poverty and the link that exists with unremunerated work - and their impact on the capacity of families to ensure the care of children and dependants, as well as the sharing of family responsibilities, including for domestic work, is an issue that affects not only women but society as a whole.

4. As was emphasized in the first plans and strategies drawn up at the national level for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the sharing of family responsibilities and their reconciliation with professional life must constitute a priority objective.

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B. Increasing the role of men in family responsibilities

5. Family responsibilities rest equally with men and with women. Greater participation of men in family responsibilities, including domestic work and child and dependant care, would contribute to the welfare of children, women and men themselves. Even though this change is bound to be slow and difficult, it remains essential.

6. These changes, which imply a change in outlook, can be encouraged by Governments, notably through education and by promoting greater access on the part of men to activities hitherto regarded as women's activities.

C. Changing attitudes and stereotypes

7. It is important to change attitudes towards the status of unremunerated work and the relative role of women and men in the family, the community, the workplace and society at large. Measures taken to this end must be aimed as much at women as at men, and at the different generations, with particular attention to adolescents.

8. These measures should include recognition of the social and economic importance of unremunerated work, and should aim at desegregating the labour market through, inter alia, the adoption and application of laws embodying the principle of equal pay for women for equal work or work of equal value.

9. The essential role of the educational system, particularly in primary schools, in changing the perception of the role of girls and boys, must be recognized. The role of national mechanisms and of non-governmental organizations in promoting change is a major one.

D. Adapting the legal system

10. There is a need, through legislation and/or other appropriate measures, to rebalance the sharing of family responsibilities between men and women, and to inform them of the existing legislative provisions.

11. Reconciliation of work-related and family responsibilities and the development of a legislative framework for ensuring child and dependant care (particularly of the elderly and disabled) must be promoted by society as a whole, including management and labour, and by Governments. The latter must be the main agents of change.

12. Action is needed to:

(a) Promulgate and apply laws and other measures to prohibit all forms of direct or indirect discrimination based on gender or matrimonial status, inter alia with reference to family responsibilities;

(b) Promote laws on maternity leave;

(c) Promote legislative measures, incentives and/or measures of encouragement that would enable men and women to take parental leave and save

social security benefits. Such measures should protect working men and women against dismissal and guarantee their right to re-enter employment in an equivalent post;

(d) Promote conditions and a way of organizing work that would enable women and men to reconcile their family and professional life, particularly through the introduction of flexi-time for women and men;

(e) Eliminate the differences in remuneration between women and men for equal work or work of equal value, and promote the development of non-discriminatory methods of evaluating work and their inclusion in wage negotiations;

(f) Work actively towards ratification of or accession to and implementation of international and regional human rights treaties;

(g) Ratify and accede to and ensure implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women so that universal ratification can be achieved by the year 2000;

(h) Ensure the application of laws and guidelines and encourage the adoption of voluntary codes of conduct which guarantee that international labour standards, such as International Labour Organization Convention No. 100 on equality of remuneration of men and women for equal work or work of equal value, apply equally to working women and working men;

(i) Encourage the participation of women in bodies responsible for negotiating working conditions. In this respect, it is interesting to note the relationship that exists between the proportion of women participating in negotiations on working conditions and the importance attached to this problem;

(j) Encourage social security regimes to take into account the time spent by working men and women in child and dependant care.

E. Adopting and promoting a family support programme and encouraging reconciliation of family and professional life for women and men

13. It is essential to define, at the national, regional and local levels, a family support programme that is based on the principle of equal sharing of family responsibilities and is consistent with the policies for promoting equality in the labour market and protecting the rights of the child. Particular attention should be paid to single-parent families. There is a need, where necessary, to revise legislation so that women are no longer defined as "minors" and/or dependants and to ensure that they enjoy the same access to resources as men.

14. The State and society at large have a responsibility for child and dependant care. This responsibility is reflected in the adoption of an integrated approach at the local and national levels in order to ensure access to affordable and reliable services for the children and dependants (particularly those who are elderly and disabled) of women and men who are working, undergoing training, studying or seeking employment. This

responsibility can also take the form of incentives for parents and employers, of a partnership between local authorities, management and labour, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, and of the provision of technical assistance and access to vocational training.

15. With a view to complementing the efforts being made in this direction by Governments, international financing institutions should be encouraged to take into account the growing need for financing to establish day-care nurseries, particularly in areas where there is a greater concentration of poverty, in order to facilitate the training of mothers or their entry into paid employment.

16. Child and dependant care is capable of constituting a major source of new jobs for women and for men.

17. The burden of domestic work needs to be eased through drinking water and energy supply, making use of appropriate technologies.

F. Developing research and information exchange

18. Research could be conducted drawing on the capabilities of the various United Nations agencies, particularly in the following areas, when compatible with the System-wide Medium-term Plan:

(a) Changes in the situation and attitudes of men and women with regard to the reconciliation of family and professional life and the sharing of family responsibilities - in particular, a study should be conducted in the context of sub-Saharan Africa;

(b) Compilation of data on the unremunerated work which is already taken into account in the United Nations system of accounts, for example in agriculture and other types of non-mercantile production activity;

(c) Collection and exchange of information on the different systems that exist for alimony payments;

(d) Unremunerated work which addresses the measuring and value of their work, within the framework of the implementation of the Platform for Action;

(e) Time-use surveys of unremunerated work of women and men, with a view to measuring its impact on the use and monitoring of economic and social policies.

G. Promoting change through international cooperation

19. The Commission on the Status of Women recommends to the Economic and Social Council that all the strategies and policies of the United Nations and of Member States designed to promote gender equality should take fully into account child and dependant care, sharing of family work and responsibilities between men and women, and unremunerated work, as integral parts of the concept of equality between men and women.

20. The Commission on the Status of Women recommends to the Economic and Social Council that the suggestions contained in this document be taken into account in defining the policies of the United Nations system, as well as those of Member States.